

~~SECRET~~
No Foreign Dissem

24

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
20 August 1973

Khmer Communist Occupation and
Population Control Policies

Information on Khmer Communist occupation policies, like intelligence on other aspects of the insurgency in the Cambodian countryside, is sparse. Nevertheless, intelligence reports and refugee interrogation do provide a rough picture of Communist policies and the problems the insurgents have encountered in attempting to control more than 3.5 million of Cambodia's 8 million people.

The Khmer Communists are still very much caught up in the mechanics of warmaking and have scant resources or time left over to absorb politically the huge stretches of countryside gained in the past year. Their over-riding objective has been to maintain pressure on Phnom Penh's forces and on the capital itself. Although the insurgents have been expanding their political apparatus in some regions, only nominal administrative attention has been given to many other areas. The flight of much of the population once resident in insurgent-controlled towns and villages, of course, has served to lighten the Khmer Communists' administrative load.

Up to a year or so ago, most of the Khmer Communist experience in ruling occupied territories had been gained in the remote, largely unpopulated northeast, where the Khmer Communists found it relatively easy to impose a new political structure and to exert their control at the local level. Their efforts to translate this experience into quick pacification of the more populated territories they recently captured have sparked outright resistance in some areas and provoked a mass exodus in others. According to one report, about 10,000 Cambodians in the Communist-held portions of southeastern Svay Rieng Province fled to the provincial capital in June. Several thousand more have reportedly crossed the border into South Vietnam.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~
No Foreign Dissem

More recently, the Khmer Communists seem to realize that they must curb their excesses and work harder to win the allegiance of the people. But until the Khmer Communists can fully shift gears from military to political action, they can be expected to use draconian measures such as dispersal of population, tight trade and travel regulations, and substantial curtailment of personal freedom whenever necessary.

Dislocation of Population

The Khmer Communists have relied heavily on the dispersal and relocation of the civilian population--particularly in contested areas. The purposes of this policy are to deny agricultural production to the GKR and acquire it for the insurgents, to deny FANK access to a manpower pool, and to effect Communist control and political indoctrination. When the town of Kep fell to the Communists last April, its entire population was forcibly relocated to insurgent-held territory north of the district town of Kompong Trach, some 20 miles away. The inhabitants of several villages in the area reportedly shared the same fate. In February of this year the Khmer Communists reportedly moved 1,500 persons from the vicinity of the Kampot provincial capital. One fairly reliable source has claimed that there would be additional forced population transfers during the harvest and planting season this fall.

The dispersal of population along the border with South Vietnam is probably aimed at controlling and limiting the increasingly lucrative contraband trade with the Vietnamese. A Khmer Communist cadre in early June reportedly said that all civilians living along the border were to be resettled to Khmer Communist-controlled areas, regardless of any dissension the move would create between the insurgents and the population. Earlier this year, a Khmer Communist rallier from Svay Rieng Province told his interrogators that tightened controls on trade, especially medicine, had created resentment among the residents, many of whom subsequently fled to government or South Vietnamese-controlled territory.

~~SECRET~~
No Foreign Dissem

~~SECRET~~
No Foreign Dissem

The Communists have often had difficulty in making forced relocations stick. In Kampot, for example, many of the villagers sent to Khmer Communist areas have since moved back to their former homes. They cite privations and hardships as reasons for their return, a complaint heard in several other provinces. A recent Khmer Communist rallier said that, based on his contact among the population in two insurgent-held districts of Svay Rieng, he was convinced that the people wanted to return to government areas simply because they believed that life would be better there.

Religious Suppression

The insurgents' treatment of religious personnel and practices varies from area to area, apparently depending on the orientation of the local insurgent authorities. When Khmer Communist personnel are in control, monks often are ridiculed and attacked as unproductive members of society. The monks have been forced to work and have on occasion been pressed into military units. Pagodas and religious schools are usually closed, and residents prevented from worshipping.

Secular village schools have been established in many Khmer Communist - controlled areas, replacing the village pagoda as the traditional center of popular education. Pagodas have also been used for military training and other war-related purposes. In Prey Veng and Svay Rieng provinces, the Communists reportedly forbid all pagodas to admit novices, except to replace monks that die.

There are reports that the practices of using religious facilities for military purposes and the impressment of Buddhist functionaries have caused resentment among the population. It is difficult to judge just how much impact they have on the average Cambodian who is faced in many areas with the more immediate task of day-to-day survival. Still, probably one of the most generally unpopular aspects of insurgent policy has been the occupation of the Angkor temple complex in Siem Reap Province by the Khmer and

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

No Foreign Dissem

Vietnamese Communists. The North Vietnamese 203rd Regiment was stationed at Angkor until July 1973, when it began to move eastward toward South Vietnam. The presence of Vietnamese troops at Cambodia's national shrine has almost certainly been considered a sacrilege by most Khmer.

Economic Controls

The Communists have collectivized only a very small amount of the agricultural land they control. Generally, farmers have been permitted to retain their land, but all produce and livestock must be sold at fixed prices through the local Communist-established cooperative that serves as the primary and usually the only market place for each village. Trade with government-controlled areas is generally proscribed, but sometimes permitted when the insurgents suffer critical shortages. There has been some redistribution of lands owned by absentee landlords or by people who fled to government-controlled areas. Such land is typically given to people relocated by the insurgents. In general, the insurgents keep tight control over all agricultural business, both as a source of tax revenue and as a source of much-needed, non-military goods. Throughout insurgent-controlled territory peasants are told what crops to plant.

Taxes are collected in insurgent-held areas, in amounts varying from one riel per month to several hundred, depending on the wealth of the individual and sometimes his ethnic background (ethnic Chinese usually being harder hit than Khmers). The precise level of taxes is generally determined by Communist village committee chiefs who research each family's ability to pay. Villagers are also required to contribute rice and other staples and are often required to feed troops moving through their areas. Widespread use is reportedly made of forced labor, and entire villages occasionally have been pressed into portering military supplies.

These policies have created considerable popular disaffection. A recurring theme in most refugee reports is resentment of the high cost of living in

No Foreign Dissem

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

No Foreign Dissem

Communist areas. Refugees in Kampot claim that, at the lowest levels, the insurgents are little more than "bandits" who confiscate property and livestock. A typical complaint of many refugees is that they have to sell their production to the insurgents at low prices and then pay high prices at Communist co-operatives.

Political Repression and Terrorism

There have been infrequent reports of executions and atrocities committed against captured government civilian and military personnel. Fairly reliable evidence indicates that in the late spring of 1973 a number of pro-government villagers in the Siem Reap area were bayoneted by Communist troops. More recently, an unconfirmed [REDACTED] report alleges that as many as 200 captured Cambodian Army personnel were executed in July in Kompong Cham Province. Most of our evidence, however, suggests that the normal procedure is to send captured personnel, notably lower-level officials, to prison labor camps, where they can be "re-educated." After a period of time, sometimes a year or more, prisoners are permitted more freedom of action, but are still subjected to close scrutiny. Eventually, they may be permitted to return to their villages and join a Communist military unit or political organization.

25X1X4-2

One form of mass political reprisal practiced by the Communists has been the wanton burning of entire villages. Such burnings occurred with considerable frequency as late as early June of this year. Since then, however, the Khmer Communist leadership has issued directives forbidding such action, and these directives apparently have been obeyed. Few, if any, deliberate instances of village destruction by the insurgents have come to light in recent weeks.

No Foreign Dissem

~~SECRET~~